

ROLE OF MEDIA IN GLORIFYING WHITE COMPLEXION

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ABSTRACT: *The current study was conducted to explore the role of media and significance of media to prevail the importance and glorifying white complexions in society. Effects of fair complexion on individual's self-esteem, self-efficacy and level of confidence were also studied. The significance of complexion in considering marriage proposals, marital adjustment and gender differences were also studied. The sample of six individuals was taken which included: three males and three females with fair complexion and belonged to media profession. Purposive sampling strategy was employed. Qualitative research method was used and semi structured interviews were conducted for data collection. Results were explored on the basis of grounded theory and codes, categories and themes were originated. Results revealed that individuals with fair complexion reported high self-esteem and self-efficacy. The reason behind that they receive special attention, benefits from society. Fair complexion dominates in many aspect of life and plays an important role in seeking marriage proposals and marital adjustment. Research findings will increase the acceptance of individuals have potentials, creativity and abilities rather than complexion in our culture and identify the prejudice attitude toward individuals average complexion in Pakistan.*

Key Words: Self- Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Marital Adjustment, Qualitative Research, Prejudice

1. INTRODUCTION

Complexion is considered as fascinating criteria of beauty for human beings since the distant past. In South Asia, fair skin is considered as a legacy of upper class while dark skin is related with laborers working in the sun in fields. In the subcontinent British ruled for around two centuries. Just then the white were in ruling position and dark were the slaves. The royal heritage in the subcontinent may be the one contributing reason to set the belief that white people are powerful, beautiful, fortunate and attractive. Moreover, American and British media which includes film, television and entertainment industry exerted an influential effect in the subcontinent to reinforce the belief that whites were enjoying more opportunities and have great influence on world. Power and dominating characteristics are often associated with fair skin. The importance for whiteness revealed in the subcontinent film industry. The leading characters (male and female) of films are usually fair and beautiful, and the villains are dark [1].

From Cultural point of view, complexion plays a significant role in most of the areas of life. In Pakistani culture complexion is a symbol of beauty, attractiveness and status. The individuals who have fair complexion are considered to be lucky, beautiful, attractive and rich. In our culture different schemas develop related to complexion like if a person belongs to Pathan family he must be considered fair, beautiful. If a person belongs to Jutt and Rajput family he must have dark complexion. Individuals who belong to Kashmeri and Butt family have fair complexion. Rich individuals are presumed to be beautiful and fair while poor individuals are presumed to have dark complexion. In our culture people are attracted towards fair complexion individuals as compared to dark complexion individuals. In Pakistani culture women who have fair complexion enjoy many benefits like they may face less problems in proposals and marriage, Males are attracted to fair complexion females. They also entertain benefits in work sitting, get favoritism from bosses. They face no ridicules, rumors and criticism. While dark complexion females may face many difficulties in life like criticism in work setting, in home from siblings, life partner and sometime from parents [4].

The rationale of the study is that complexion may become the reason of appropriate adjustment in life because individuals with fair complexion seem to receive preferential treatment in many department of life and they may face less difficulty regarding job, marriage and marital adjustment, socioeconomic status, even in educational opportunities. Complexion also effects individual's self-esteem, self-efficacy and level of confidence. Individuals with fair complexion may face less criticism from parents, siblings, relatives, neighbors, friends, class fellows, teachers, colleagues, and authority figures and, their life partner as compared to individuals with dark complexion.

Different studies on skin complexion affirmed that fair complexion has positive impacts on self-esteem and self-efficacy. Women with fair complexion may have good and appealing opportunities regarding marital perspective and they considered more social as compared to dark complexion women [13]. A research was done to know the relationship between dissatisfaction and psychological well-being among adolescents with different skin complexion. It was found that the Psychological significance concerning complexion cannot be underestimated [2].

Goffman describes skin color as an imperative part of physical appearance and individual border to present the identity. Skin color is a characteristic which helps to pursue a person where ever he or she goes. Skin color is considered a criteria of attractiveness and it is also the basis of labeling someone as pretty or ugly [2].

2. DOMINATION OF FAIRNESS

White majority dominates in Asia. Individuals with dark complexion don't dominate in house, marriage market, job selections. Their self-concept (self-esteem and self-efficacy) is less than individuals with fair complexion. The wish for white complexion creates a lot of psychological problems like the poor self-confidence and feelings of inferiority among women. Indian community encourages color biases by preferring fair skin individuals over black individuals [7].

There is an old Louisiana saying that goes, "if you are brown, hang around. If you are yellow, you are mellow. If you are

white, you are all right". If you are black, get back" (Kerr, 2005). This saying has a thoughtful effect on the psyche of people having fair and dark complexion. In the culture of India; fair and beautiful words are interlinked and considered as same. Fairness is considered a symbol of attractiveness, superiority and beauty [7].

Complexion has great influence or impact in selection for job. Individuals with fair complexion get jobs easily, grasp attention of interviewer during interview and they may face less obstacles or hardship in getting jobs than individuals with dark complexion [3].

Complexion has an effect on educational success and socioeconomic class. Individuals with fair complexion received more advantages educationally and economically, and more likely to experience status advancement as compare to dark individuals. In our society these social benefits enhance the privileges of fair skin individuals rather than dark skin individuals: this kind of classification is the general definition of colorism [1].

Skin complexion has an important role in the job setting regarding behavior. Fair individuals received better behavior in work setting as compared to black people. Fair skin is linked with capabilities and status. Fair workers may experience good and nice attitude from boss rather than dark worker [15]. Complexion also has a connection with the status of job. Fair people are perceived as officers, owner of mill, manager model and hero or heroines. People often relate fair complexion with high status jobs while black complexion is considered as a complexion of lower class like labor, gatekeeper and villains [1].

Fairness is considered a corn stone of beauty in Asian Culture. Skin complexion is an essential part in the perception of female's beauty. It has great impact of their marital context, job context and social status [6]. The preference of fair complexion over dark complexion is a huge bias for dark people and it is a contributory factor to disturb one's mental health, generate some psychological problems like may face stress and adjustment problems, become timid, shy and socially withdrawal. Discrimination due to complexion is related with increased depression and lower levels of mastery and self- esteem among women of all ages. Dark complexion is more serious issue for women than men and it matters more for the mental health of mid-life and older women but not for younger women. Mature women who are darker face greater risk to their psychological well-being and this is due in part to complexion. The relationship between discrimination and mental health is varying by racial appearance or phenotype where Phenotype refers to external physical appearance; a combination of skin complexion eye and hair color, hair texture, facial features and height/weight [9].

Females with whitish complexion had several benefits including better marriage proposals, social acceptability, employment status, and females with dark complexion had fewer psychological problems like depression and low frequency of hypertension [2].

3. ROLE OF COMPLEXION IN MARRIAGES

Complexion has a significant role in marriage proposals and marital adjustment. Marital adjustment is a condition of adjustment where clashes may be least [Schumacher & Leonard, 2005]. Leonard [2005] defined marital adjustment as an accommodation, friendship and intimate relationships between husband and wife.

Women's fair complexion has positive impact on her demand in society regarding marriage proposals. In general, a liking for fair and beautiful women is a universal fact and has been known to exist in subcontinent. In subcontinent fair skin is regarded as a standard of purity and innocence [14].

In our society families may prefer to choose life partners for their children more beautiful, handsome, smart, attractive and rich. Especially men's families 1st demand during searching daughter in law is she should be fair, beautiful. People with dark complexion may face rejection during marriage proposals and after marriage may be from life partner and in-laws but in our society it is reported that females may face profound pressure and troubles with dark complexion than males. In our culture everyone shows great concern toward the complexion of bride and if the bride complexion is fair then in-laws feels proud. Fair complexion increases the attractiveness towards the opposite sex [18].

Fairness Creams

White skin receives great approval in the context of many cultures [12]. The desire to have fair complexion leads a person toward severe physical defects. Individuals having dark complexion become sensitive and have the feelings of inadequacy [16]. In the context of physical health consequences, the wish for "whiteness" has major psychosocial problems including lower self-confidence levels as well as perceptions of inferiority among Indian women [7]. The embedded desire for fairness is very common among the Indian community and this thing create a great deal of color biasness. Sonali Johnson [11], stated in the "Journal of Health Management" that "India's historical preoccupation with fairness is in fact racism and sexism expressed through various cultural and historical mediums and reinforced by the contemporary beauty industry." This color discrimination, which is continued through advertising and the availability of whitening creams on large scale, has received great attention from women's rights groups in India as well as the rest of the world. This phenomenon is not simply limited to Indian women; many cultures experience some form of colorism in their daily lives [10].

The superiority of fairness has been exploited by the makers of fairness creams. A consumer goods giant launched the mother of all fairness creams in the subcontinent in 1976. Today, the product is marketed in over 38 countries and has become the largest selling skin lightening cream in the world. Today a number of other companies have also jumped on the 'Fairness creams' movement [17]. The craze for fairness creams has emerged in the last fifty years. Skin lightening treatments are offered in many beauty salons. These treatments rely on bleaching to give the skin a lighter appearance. Skin whitening and fairness creams also have spread to other regions with dark skinned people like Malaysia, Egypt, Nigeria and other African countries. Recently a fairness cream has been launched exclusively for

men. Initial surveys show that an increasing number of Indian men are already using or are in favor of using the cream. Recently the male fairness cream was also launched in Nepal and other South Asian countries [14]. There are many other products and medical treatments also offered to treat lighter skin tone like white injections, tablets and many other things [Morris, 2009].

Rationale of the Study

The topic was chosen to investigate the media role in giving significance of white complexion and effects of white complexion on individual’s personality regarding self-esteem, self -efficacy and level of confidence. This study is also conducted to establish that individual abilities and potentials are more preferable for society development than complexion.

Objectives

- The objectives of the research are,
- To explore the effects of fair complexion on individual’s self-esteem and self- efficacy.
- To study the significance of complexion in seeking marriage proposals and marital adjustment.
- To investigate the media role in glorifying white complexion.

Research Questions

- The present study aims at answering the questions:
1. How does fair complexion effect on individual self-esteem and self- efficacy?
 2. How does complexion play a role in getting marriage proposals and marital adjustment?
 3. How does media glorify white complexion?

4. METHODOLOGY

Participants

In present study the sample consisted of six individuals, three males and three females belong to media. One was a young unmarried male who was post graduated family and doing job as a reporter. The second male was a married man who was graduate and doing job in dunya news. The last male was a young unmarried man who was post graduate, and doing job of reporter. One female was unmarried, student of Mass Com also working in t.v channel. The second was a young unmarried female, student of Mass com working on news channel. The third was a young unmarried female, working as a reporter.

Material

The researcher prepared Interview schedules for semi structured interviews. A pilot study was used to gained relevant open ended questions and find out the significant questions for extracting the desired information through in depth interview.

Semi Structured Interview

In qualitative research, semi structured interviewing is the most commonly used method of data collection. The reason is that interview data can be analyzed in a variety of ways, and semi structured interviewing is compatible with several methods of data analysis (e.g discourse analysis, grounded theory, interpretative phenomenology). It is easier to arrange than others forms of qualitative data collection [19].

Procedure

At first a pilot study was conducted on 20 individuals to find out the relevant open ended questions. The sample was consisted six individuals including three females and three males belong to media. Purposive and convenience sampling technique was used. The objective of the current study was explained to the respondents. Rapport was built with the interviewees before conducting the interview. Informed consent and audio recording permission was taken from interviewees. The duration of the interview was 40-45 minutes. Data was collected through detailed semi structure interview. After data collection, interview was transcribed in written form. Line by line coding was used as an initial tool. Data was integrated with codes and categories. Themes were identified from the data and organize them in clusters. Finally the tables of organized themes were drawn.

Data Analysis

To conceptualize the data grounded theory method was used. Grounded Theory is an empirical qualitative paradigm which seeks to adhere to the scientific method. It follows the process of induction from empirical data and is not influenced by preconceived theoretical Notions [8].

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is used to assist the process of finding or theory generation. Grounded theory involves the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning of data. Grounded theory is both the process of category identification and integration (as method) and its products (as theory) [19].



Findings

The findings were presented on the base of thematic analysis by using grounded theory and themes were emerged from coding and catogries. Semi structured interview technique was applied. Summary of the findings showed that fair complexion is considered as a criterion of beauty. It plays a major role in marriage proposals and marital adjustment. Media promote and exaggerate fairness. In media white complexion is a milestone to achieve success

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The basic purpose of current study was to explore the role of media in glorifying white complexion and effects of white

complexion on individual's self-esteem, self-efficacy. Role of complexion in marriage proposals, marital adjustment also studied.

The results revealed that complexion is considered as a symbol of beauty. The attraction toward the fair complexion is seen all over the world. Individuals with fair complexion are considered to have appealing personality while people with dark complexion face scornful attitudes. In this materialistic world appearance matters a lot and fair complexion furnishes and grooms individual's appearance. The results of the present study shows that fair people are dominating in many aspects of life.

Individuals with fair complexion enjoy a lot of benefits e. g they easily get attention in social gatherings, be given preference and encouragement in many fields, considered beautiful and attractive, and they are given as first choice regarding marriage proposals while individuals with dark complexion face hurdles in getting attention of others, do not receive preferences and encouragement from society and relatives. They are always underestimated and discouraged from others. They faced discriminatory behavior since childhood. It was found that children with fair complexion are given more love and attention than children with dark complexion. One of a female interviewee stated that "Everyone loves fair complexion children; they look very cute and ignore children with dark complexion".

In dramas it is also shown that females with fair complexion appreciated in everywhere and become the first preference in marriage proposals; boys want to get marry with beautiful and fair girls. They face no problem in jobs, search proposals, and then they are dominated in married life because of husband likeness. It is also shown that dark females are rejected by the society. When they looked for the professional opportunities they are given cold shoulder by the surrounding society. They also faced rejection in marriage proposals which leads to developing an inferiority complex.

In songs fair complexion is exaggerated. Individuals with fair complexion become the center of attention in all types of social gatherings while dark individuals are treated as inferior. Fair individuals are given preference in proposal search and perform leading roles in dramas, movies and videos.

In songs, poetry etc. only fair complexion is praised. There are so many ads of creams which show that fair complexion is overpowers. In media talent is least preference as compared to external beauty. All anchors of leading channels have fair complexion. One of a dark male stated

"Media spread out biasness and promote beauty".

In media, commercials of fairness creams also discourage dark people and create a sense of inferiority among them. This thing compels them to use fairness creams in order to improve their complexion. In this way popularity of these creams increases and everyday different new fairness creams are coming in market because of that business of fairness creams also progress by leaps and bounds.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study will help to explore the effects of fair complexion on individual's self-esteem and self-efficacy. It will adhere to identify the benefits of fair complexion individuals. This study will bring to light the importance of complexion in

getting marriage proposals and marital adjustment. Positive role of media will helpful to discourage the preference of fair complexion over abilities, potentials in society. However prior research in this field has not been conducted and complexion which is imperative part of Pakistani culture needs to be studied.

7. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has various strengths and weakness. The basic strength of the study is that it is helpful to highlight the prejudice and bias role of media towards white complexion. Another strength is this study is helpful to create awareness that potentials and abilities are more important for success than complexion. Another major strength of the study is it is use to increase self-esteem and self-efficacy of people having whitish complexion, encourage them, to promote their abilities, give them confirmation that nature, good behavior and inner beauty is more important than appearance and fair complexion. Education through workshop and seminars programs should be done regarding superiority of white complexion. One limitation of the study is it is qualitative study so this study cannot be generalized. Other is due to individual differences findings cannot be applied on others. Sample size was too short which did not show true representation of all dark individuals. The language used for interview was Urdu which after translation might change the meaning to be conveyed.

8. CONCLUSION

The present study analyzed the role of media in glorifying white complexion and effects of white complexion on individual's self-esteem, self-efficacy. Role in marriage proposals and marital adjustment, and gender differences in relation to personality has also explored. The research revealed that fair complexion dominate everywhere in the society. A girl with fair complexion is accepted by the society and she enjoyed benefits regarding marriage proposals and adjustment. It was also resulted that fair individuals encounter high self-efficacy and self-esteem as they have more preference for professional establishment. Media play significant role in making opinions of society regarding complexion. Media through dramas, t.v commercials, films and many other sources show that fair complexion is a symbol of success, respect, prosperity, opportunities, appreciation and acceptance in society.

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